

District Program Monitoring Report

2018-19 Recruitment and Retention Pilot

Date: February 19, 2019

Section 1: Brief Overview.

In January 2018, as part of its approval of a readopted 2017-18 budget, the Aurora Public Schools (APS) Board of Education approved using a portion of additional one-time dollars the district would receive to pilot incentives to recruit and retain staff in some of the district's hardest to fill positions.

In February 2018, APS began a one-year pilot incentive program to recruit and retain staff in some of its hardest to fill positions, as part of the district's larger Human Capital Strategy and focus on strengthening recruitment and retention. Specifically, the pilot program offered staff members, new and returning, who filled one of the eligible roles at targeted schools a one-time incentive for committing to APS. The pilot targeted the incentive to the following groups:

- **Hard-to-Fill Special Service Provider Roles.** The incentive was targeted to special service provider roles that had the greatest number of vacancies and/or were ultimately filled by third party contractors. Given this methodology, the incentives were targeted to the following roles: speech language pathologists, school psychologists, occupational therapists, and nurses. They were available to all individuals in these roles, since the hiring of these roles occurs at the district level and then individuals in these roles are placed in specific buildings after hiring.
- **Hard-to-Fill Teaching Roles at Designated Schools.** The incentive was targeted toward the district's hardest to fill teaching content areas in schools by identifying the district's hardest to fill teaching content areas based on vacancies at the start of the 17-18 school year. Given this methodology, the incentives were targeted to the following roles: special education teachers, secondary (6th-12th grade) math teachers and secondary science teachers. For the purposes of piloting these incentives, these role specific incentives were targeted toward schools that had experienced above average turnover rates over multiple years (above 29%).

For both of these targeted groups, current APS staff were eligible for a \$3000 stipend if they committed to return to APS for the 18-19 school year by April 6, 2018. New to APS staff, as well as any staff who ultimately returned to these roles but did not commit by the above date, were eligible for a \$2500 stipend.

Section 2. Key evidence for Implementation.

Locally and nationally, there are particular content areas and support functions that school systems struggle to fill year after year. In APS and consistent with national trends, this means positions, such as those in special education and secondary math and science, have limited candidate pools and at times remain unfilled into the school year as learning and support for students has already begun. For special service provider roles of school psychologists, nurses, speech language pathologists, and occupational therapists, to fill these roles, APS has had to contract with third-party organizations, at a greater cost, to ensure APS has the providers necessary to meet student needs.

In addition, prior to the pilot, APS was one of the few districts in the metro area that did not provide some form of differentiated pay or incentive for hard to fill subject areas. For example, Cherry Creek School District gives portability credit for up to 10 years of experience for those in designated “hard to fill” roles, as compared to their standard 5 year maximum. Denver Public Schools offers an annual incentive for designated hard-to-fill roles, which for 2018-19 is \$2,738. Douglas County School District has differentiated salary schedules for general roles, hard to hire roles, and specialist roles, with approximately \$6,000-\$7,000 difference in base salaries between general and hard to hire roles.

Section 3: Demographics.

By extending incentives for special service providers to nurses, speech language pathologists, occupational therapists, and school psychologists in all schools, the recruitment and retention pilot reached all traditional APS schools. Specifically the following table indicates the number of special service providers that were offered the initial incentive and the numbers that ultimately received these incentives.

Table 1. Participation of targeted Special Service Provider roles in pilot incentive.

Role	# of existing APS employees eligible for initial incentive	# of eligible APS employees who committed early and received \$3000 incentive (%)	# of returning eligible APS employees who did not commit early and received \$2,500 incentive	# of new eligible APS employees who received \$2,500 incentive
Nurses	47	41 (87%)	0	2
Occupational Therapists	17	16 (94%)	0	5
School Psychologists	48	38 (79%)	0	7
Speech Language Pathologists	72	46 (64%)	0	16
SSP Subtotal	184	141 (77%)	0	30

As indicated above, the hard-to-fill teaching role incentive was targeted at the hardest to fill teaching content areas in schools by identifying the district’s hardest to fill teaching content areas based on vacancies at the start of the 17-18 school year and piloting these role specific incentives in schools that had experienced above average turnover rates over multiple years (above 29%). As a result, this incentive targeted special education and secondary math and science teachers at the following 20 schools: Meadowood Child Development Center (CDC), Jamaica CDC, Dalton Elementary, Iowa Elementary, Jewell Elementary, Kenton Elementary, Lyn Knoll Elementary, Sixth Avenue Elementary, Tollgate Elementary, Paris Elementary, Vaughn Elementary, Wheeling Elementary, Boston Elementary, Clyde Miller P-8, Aurora Hills Middle School,

Columbia Middle School, North Middle School, Aurora West College Preparatory Academy, Aurora Central High School, and Vista Peak Preparatory.

Specifically, the following table indicates the number of teachers that were eligible for the initial incentive and the numbers that ultimately received these incentives.

Table 2. Participation of targeted teaching role in identified schools in pilot incentive.

Subject	# of existing APS employees eligible for initial incentive	# of eligible APS employees who committed early and received \$3000 incentive (%)	# of returning eligible APS employees who did not commit early and received \$2,500 incentive	# of new eligible APS employees who received \$2,500 incentive
Math	56	38 (68%)	2	17
Science	62	38 (61%)	2	15
Special Education	111	57 (52%)	25	39
<i>Teaching Role Subtotal</i>	229	133 (58%)	29	71

Section 4. Fidelity & Outcomes (Evidence of Effectiveness).

As a result of this pilot APS expected to see improved retention rates for the targeted roles, fewer roles needing to be filled by outside providers, and a stronger pool of external applicants wanting to teach in APS.

The following table shows the turnover rates of schools that was used to identify schools targeted for the incentive for teachers of math, science, and special education compared to the turnover rate for the 18-19 school year, as of October 2018. Of the 20 schools at which teachers of math, science, and special education received incentives, fourteen schools or 70% saw improved turnover rates, four schools or 20% saw worse turnover rates, and two schools or 10% had consistent turnover rates. The overall turnover rate for these schools improved from 47% to 29%. Final turnover data for the year will be available at the end of this school year.

Table 3. Comparison of turnover rates by school for targeted teaching roles: math, science, and special education at targeted schools.

Targeted Schools	3 year avg. Turnover for math, science, and special education combined	Turnover between 17-18 and 18-19¹
Lyn Knoll Elementary School	67%	50%
Sixth Avenue Elementary School	56%	33%
Tollgate Elementary School	53%	20%
AWCPA - Aurora West College Prep Academy	51%	20%
Paris Elementary School	50%	100%
Vaughn Elementary School	50%	100%
Clyde Miller K-8 School	48%	50%
Aurora Hills Middle School	47%	46%
North Middle School Health Sciences & Technology Campus	47%	53%
Meadowood Child Development Center	47%	0%
Aurora Central High School	47%	26%
Wheeling Elementary School	42%	0%
Boston K-8 School	38%	25%
Dalton Elementary School	33%	0%
Iowa Elementary School	33%	0%
Jamaica Child Development Center	33%	33%
Jewell Elementary School	33%	50%
Kenton Elementary School	33%	25%
Vista PEAK Preparatory	31%	14%
Columbia Middle School	29%	29%
Combined Turnover Rate for identified schools	47%	29%

More specifically, when looking at the turnover rates for individual teaching roles compared to the three year turnover rate average:

- For special education teaching roles, eleven of the twenty schools saw improved turnover rates and two schools had the same turnover rate, while seven schools had higher turnover rates.
- Of the eight secondary schools that were identified for the incentive, seven saw improvement in the turnover rate of math teachers with one staying steady, while only four saw improvement in the turnover rate for science teachers

¹ This is as of October, 2018. Retention rates will be finalized at the end of the 18-19 school year, as they will fluctuate due to terminations and new hires over the course of the year.

For Special Service Provider roles, as of October 2018, there were improved retention rates in three of the four targeted roles over the previous year, and the highest retention rates in three years in two of the four areas. The retention rate for school psychologists was down over the previous two years, despite the incentive. (See Table 4.)

As shown in Table 5, there was also a decline in Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) SSP positions hired through contracts for Speech Language Pathologists, Nurses, and Psychologists, but the FTE for contracted hires for Nurses remained the same. Additionally, there was a decline in the percentage of all Speech Language Pathologists, School Psychologists, and Occupational Therapist roles that were filled through contracts. In 2018-19, APS anticipates it will spend approximately \$475,000 less on contracted services across these four roles compared to 2017-2018. This would represent a net savings of approximately \$31,000, assuming any previously contracted FTE became direct district hires. Final costs will be available with the final report in Fall 2019.

Table 4. Retention Rates for SSP roles participating in the pilot.

	Between 15-16 and 16-17	Between 16-17 and 17-18	Between 17-18 and 18-19²
Nurses	72%	75%	90.2%
Occupational Therapists	95%	75%	89.5%
School Psychologists	85.4%	85.7%	80.4%
Speech Language Pathologists	84.85	58.13%	86.44%

Table 5. APS Contracted SSP FTE in 17-18 and 18-19 (not including leave coverage)

	17-18 # of FTE (% of FTE hired through contracts)	18-19 # of FTE (% of FTE hired through contracts)
Speech Language Pathologists	16.6 (25%)	14.6 (20%)
OT	5.4 (24%)	3.9 (15%)
School Psychologists	4 (8.5%)	2 (4.6%)
Nurses	1 (2%)	1 (2%)

² This is as of October, 2018. Retention rates will be finalized at the end of the 18-19 school year, as they will fluctuate due to terminations and new hires over the course of the year.

Section 5. Program Budget.

The following table reflects the number of stipends paid as part of the pilot program for the 18-19 school year.

Table 6. Cost of pilot incentive program.

Category	Amount
Stipends for Early Commitments	\$822,000
Stipends for New Hires and Returning Staff Members who did not Commit early	\$325,000
Total	\$1,107,000

Section 6. Staffing Requirements.

The pilot program was administered by the Division of Human Resources. No additional staff was needed to administer the initial pilot.

Section 7. Stakeholder Feedback.

Through a survey of participants in the pilot, the following information was collected about the impact of the incentives on the decisions of both returning APS staff and new applicants.

When surveying APS teachers who were eligible for the retention incentive to return to their role for the 18-19 school year:

- 58% were already planning to return to APS prior to learning about the incentive, while 40% were undecided
- 67% indicated that the incentive was very or extremely influential in their decision to commit early to return to their school

When surveying APS special service providers who were eligible for the retention incentive to return to their role for the 18-19 school year:

- 51% were already planning to return to APS prior to learning about the incentive, while 47% were undecided
- 69% indicated that the incentive was very or extremely influential in their decision to commit early to return to their school

When surveying new teachers who were eligible for the recruitment incentive for the 18-19 school year:

- 83% were already planning to apply to APS prior to learning about the incentive, while 17% were undecided
- 33% said it was very or extremely influential in seeking employment with APS

When surveying new special service providers who were eligible for the recruitment incentive for the 18-19 school year:

- 35% were already planning to apply to APS prior to learning about the incentive, while 53% were undecided and 12% were not planning to apply to APS
- 71% said it was very or extremely influential in seeking employment with APS

Across both returning and new eligible APS employees, a significant portion of each have indicated that a retention incentive will be very or extremely influential in their decision to commit early to return to APS for the 19-20 school year, with 64% of returning teachers, 70% of new teachers, 78% of returning SSPs, and 94% of new SSPs.

Section 8. Program Updates & Additional Information.

On March, 15, 2018, the Aurora Education Association filed a grievance indicating that the district violated the its “contractual obligation to negotiate with the Aurora Education Association regarding wages (“AEA”) by unilaterally creating a ‘hard-to-fill’ stipend for select positions within the AEA bargaining unit.” Following the results of the arbitration and per Board direction at its January 22, 2019 meeting, any future long term incentive program would be negotiated between the district and the association and any moneys that have already been paid should not be reimbursed.

Section 9. Future Updates.

There will be an update on the 2018-19 Recruitment and Retention Pilot in fall 2019, once retention data is finalized at the completion of the 19-20 school year.